

WE, the People of the United States, in order to form
a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic
Tranquility, provide for the common defence,
and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and
our Posterity, do hereby constitute this

CENTER for the STUDY of the AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

November 2013 | Founder of the Month

John Jay (1745-1829)

New Yorker John Jay graduated from King's College (Columbia) in 1764. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1768. In 1773 he served as secretary of the royal commission that fixed the boundary between New York and New Jersey. In 1774 he married Sarah Livingston, daughter of William Livingston, a prominent New York colonial lawyer who moved to New Jersey, where he served as governor from 1776 until his death in 1790.

A reluctant rebel, Jay served on New York's Committee of Correspondence in 1774 and in the Continental Congress from 1774-1776, 1778-1779, and 1784. Absent in July 1776, Jay did not sign the Declaration of Independence though he supported it. Jay was the most prominent author of the state constitution of 1777. In the same year, he was a member of the first Committee of Safety, New York's executive authority before the implementation of the new state constitution, and he served as New York's first chief justice under that constitution from 1777-1779.

In 1779 Jay was elected president of the Continental Congress, but he soon resigned the post when appointed U.S. minister to Spain, where he frustratingly served two and a half years and failed to get Spain to recognize the United States. (Spain had a treaty with France and declared war against Great Britain in 1779.) Appointed one of five American commissioners to negotiate a peace treaty with Britain in 1781, Jay's prominence was recognized by his fellow commissioner John Adams, who described Jay as "the Washington of diplomacy."

When Jay returned to the United States in July 1784, Congress appointed him secretary for foreign affairs. For the next five years Jay served as the de facto prime minister of the United States. His five hundred reports to Congress on a variety of diplomatic and domestic concerns provided much needed guidance for Congress that helped cement the loose alliance of states during the difficult postwar depression years. However, his ill-fated negotiations with Spanish envoy Don Diego de Gardoqui in 1786 caused an eruption of sectional animosity when it was divulged that Jay was willing to give up temporarily Americans right to navigate the Mississippi River in exchange for a Spanish-American commercial treaty. Many of Jay's policies were adopted by his successor, Thomas Jefferson, who served as America's first secretary of state during the Washington administration.

In 1785 Jay helped found the New York Society for the Manumission of Slaves, and he served as its president until 1790. An ardent advocate for strengthening the Confederation government, Jay joined with Alexander Hamilton in writing *The Federalist*, a series of nationalist essays signed by Publius. Illness, however, limited his contribution to only five of the eighty-five essays. Of greater influence in changing the opinion of Antifederalists was Jay's pamphlet, *An Address to the People of the State of New-York*, published in mid-April 1788. The pamphlet convinced opponents of the Constitution to seek amendments after ratification. Jay was probably the single most important Federalist in New York's state Convention that ratified the Constitution in July 1788.

Under the new Constitution, Jay served as chief justice of the United States from 1789-1795. His most divisive decision, *Chisholm v. Georgia* (1793), provoked the passage of the Eleventh Amendment to the Constitution, which concerned the states' sovereign immunity. While chief justice, Jay served as special envoy to Britain, where he negotiated the controversial treaty that bears his name (Jay Treaty, 1795). When he returned from Britain, Jay found that he had been elected governor of New York. In 1801, after serving two three-year terms as governor, Jay retired from public life to his estate in Bedford, Westchester County, two days' ride north of New York City, where he devoted much of his attention to religion and religious causes.

John Jay to Sarah Jay, Salisbury, 29 July 1776

I always endeavor to anticipate good instead of ill Fortune, and find it turns to good Account. Were this Practice more general, I fancy Mankind would experience more Happiness than they usually do.

John Vardill to William Eden, 11 April 1778

Jay . . . is possessed of a strong Understanding though much perverted by the Study of the Law joined to a Temper naturally controversial. You can sooner gain him to your opinion by submitting to be confuted by him, than by a direct attempt to convince him. . . . He is obstinate, indefatigable, & dogmatical, but by his Courage, Zeal & abilities as a Writer & Speaker has much Popularity.

Gouverneur Morris to Governor George Clinton, Philadelphia, 10 December 1778

I have the Pleasure to inform your Excellency that the honorable John Jay Esqr. is elevated to the Chair of Congress, which as well from your Friendship for him, as for Reasons of public Importance will, I am confident, be agreeable to you. The weight of his personal Character contributed as much to his Election as the Respect for the State which hath done and suffered so much or the Regard for its Delegates which is not inconsiderable. The Public will I am confident experience many good consequences from the Exchange.

Edward Langworthy to William Duer, Philadelphia, 18 December 1778

I'm sorry we shall in a great measure lose the Oratory of Mr. Jay by placing him in the Chair—he appears to me to be a man of Ability & to have that Ornament of the understanding a lively imagination.

William Carmichael to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Philadelphia, 16 January 1779

Mr. Jay is more judicious than his predecessor in the chair [Henry Laurens], and less prolix.

John Jay to Catherine W. Livingston, Philadelphia, 27 February 1779

Perseverance in doing what we think Right, and Resignation to the Dispensations of the great Governor of the World, offer a Shield against the Darts of these Afflictions, to every body that will use it.

John Adams: Diary, 20 June 1779

I said that Mr. Jay was a Man of Wit, well informed, a good Speaker and an elegant Writer.

John Jay to Governor George Clinton, Philadelphia, 27 August 1779

Popularity is not, among the number of my objects. A seat in Congress I do not desire, and as ambition has in no instance drawn me into public life, I am sure it will never influence me to continue in it. Were I to consult my interest, I should settle here and make my fortune; were I guided by inclination, I should now be attending to a family, who independent of other misfortunes, have suffered severely in the present contest.

Jay's Instructions to William Carmichael, Cadiz, 27 January 1780

Although I have confidence in your prudence, yet permit me to recommend to you the greatest circumspection. Command yourself under every circumstance; on the one hand, avoid being suspected of servility, and on the other, let your temper be always even and your attention unremitted.

John Jay to Robert R. Livingston, Madrid, 23 May 1780

I am approaching the Age of Ambition without being influenced by its Allurements. Public Considerations induced me to leave the private Walk of Life; when they cease, I shall return to it. Believe me I shall not remain here a Moment longer than the Duties of a Citizen may detain me; and that I look forward with Pleasure to the Day when I shall again follow peaceably the Business of my Profession, and make some little Provision for my Family, whose Interests I have so long neglected for public Concerns. My Conduct moves on fixed Principles, from which I shall never deviate; and they will not permit me to leave the unfortunate part of my Family destitute of my Care and Attention longer than higher Duties call me from them.

Don Diego de Gardoqui to Spanish Foreign Minister Conde de Floridablanca, no date

The American, Jay, who is generally considered to possess talent and capacity enough to cover in great part a weakness natural to him, appears (by a consistent behavior) to be a very self-centered man (es hombre muy interesado), which passion his wife augments, because, in addition to considering herself meritoriously and being rather vain, she likes to be catered to (gusta que la obsequien), and even more to receive presents. This woman, whom he loves blindly, dominates him and nothing is done without her consent, so that her opinion prevails, though her husband at first may disagree: from which I infer that a little management in dealing with her and a few timely gifts will secure the friendship of both, because I have reason to believe that they proceed resolved to make a fortune. He is not the only one in his country who has the same weakness (flanco), for there are many poor persons (muchos necesitados) among the governing body, and I believe a skillful hand which

knows how to take advantage of favorable opportunities, and how to give dinners and above all to entertain with good wine, may profit without appearing to pursue them.

John Jay to Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert R. Livingston, Madrid, 6 October 1780

My Heart is in America, and I am impatient for the Time when the Rest of my Body will be there also.

John Jay to Benjamin Franklin, Madrid, 30 October 1780

To be active, prudent, and patient is in my power; but whether I shall reap as well as sow and water, God only knows.

John Jay to Silas Deane, Madrid, 1 November 1780

I believe that a wise and good Being governs this World, that he has ordered us to travel through it to a better, and that We have nothing but our Duty to do on the Journey which will not be a long one. Let us therefore travel on with Spirits and Cheerfulness without grumbling much at the Bad Roads, bad Inns or bad Company we may be obliged to put up with on the Way. Let us enjoy Prosperity when We have it, and in adversity endeavour to be patient and resigned without being lazy or insensible.

John Jay to President of Congress Thomas McKean, St. Ildefonso, Spain, 20 September 1781

[On Jay being appointed peace commission with Adams, Franklin and Laurens, and instructed by Congress to keep the French informed of their actions.] So far as personal pride and reluctance to humiliation may render this appointment disagreeable, I view it as a very unimportant circumstance; and should Congress, on any occasion, think it for the public good to place me in a station inferior and subordinate to the one I now hold, they will find me ready to descend from the one, and cheerfully undertake the duties of the other. My ambition will always be more gratified in being useful than conspicuous; for, in my opinion, the solid dignity of a man depends less on the height or extent of the sphere allotted to him, than on the manner in which he may fulfill the duties of it. But, sir, as an American, I feel an interest in the dignity of my country, which renders it difficult for me to reconcile myself to the idea of the sovereign independent States of America, submitting, in the persons of their ministers, to be absolutely governed by the *advice* and *opinion* of the servants of another sovereign, especially in a case of such national importance.

James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 1 November 1782

I have a great Opinion of Mr. Jay. He has conducted, if I am well informed, with great dignity.

Alexander Hamilton: Speech in Congress, Philadelphia, 19 March 1783

[In speaking of the peace commissioners' failure to fully consult France as instructed by Congress.] He observed particularly with respect to Mr. Jay that although he was a man of profound sagacity & pure integrity, yet he was of a suspicious temper, & that this trait might explain the extraordinary jealousies which he professed [of the French].

Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, Philadelphia, 11 April 1783

I cannot take my departure without paying to yourself & your worthy colleague my homage for the good work you have completed for us, and congratulating you on the singular happiness of having borne so distinguished a part both in the earliest & latest transactions of this Revolution. The terms obtained for us [in the Peace Treaty] are indeed great, and are so deemed by your country, a few ill-designing debtors excepted. I am in hopes you will continue at some one of the European courts most agreeable to yourself, that we may still have the benefit of your talents.

French Foreign Minister Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de la Luzerne, Paris, 21 July 1783

I understand that Mr. Franklin has asked for his recall, but that Congress has not yet acted on his request. I desire that it reject it, at least for the present, because it will be impossible to give Mr. Franklin a Successor as wise and also conciliating as he; moreover, I fear that we will be left with Mr. Jay, and he is the man with whom I would least like to treat of affairs: he is egotistical, and too accessible to prejudices and ill-humor.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 4 September 1783

Mr. Jay has been my Comforter. We have compared Notes, and they agree. I love him so well that I know not what I should do in Europe without him. Yet how many times have I disputed Sharply with him in Congress! I always thought him however an honest Man. He is a virtuous and religious Man. He has a Conscience, and has been persecuted, accordingly, as all conscientious Men are. Don't suspect me of Cant. I am not addicted to it. He and I have Tales to tell, dismal Tales: But it will be most for his Happiness and mine to forget them. So let them be forgotten. If the publick Good should not absolutely require them to be told.

John Jay to Kitty Livingston, Bath, England, 24 December 1783

Experience has taught me reserve.

John Jay to Gouverneur Morris, Paris, 10 February 1784

Pecuniary considerations ever held a secondary place in my estimation. I know how to live within the bounds of any income, however narrow.

John Jay to Silas Deane, Chaillot, Near Paris, 23 February 1784

I love my country and my honor better than my friends, and even my family, and am ready to part with them all whenever it would be improper to retain them.

Virginia Delegates to Congress to Governor Benjamin Harrison, Annapolis, 13 May 1784

. . . Mr. Jay, who at his own request returns to America & who was at the same time appointed Minister of the United States for Foreign Affairs. The uncommon talents of this Gentleman, & the experience he has no doubt gained in foreign Politics, will render his services in this Department momentous, at a period when our Negotiations with Europe are like to become so complicated.

Secretary of Congress Charles Thomson to John Jay, Philadelphia, 18 June 1784

I have the pleasure to inform you that on the 7th of May Congress elected you Secretary for Foreign Affairs. I do not know how you will be pleased with the appointment, but this I am sure of—that your country stands in need of your abilities in that office.

John Jay to Richard Price, New York, 27 September 1785

All that the best men can do is, to persevere in doing their duty to their country, and leave the consequences to Him who made it their duty; being neither elated by success, however great, nor discouraged by disappointments however frequent and mortifying.

Louis Guillaume Otto to French Foreign Minister Comte de Vergennes, New York, 25 December 1785

The inconsistency of Congress, My Lord, is gradually giving the Ministers of the various departments a power incompatible with the spirit of liberty and jealousy that reigns in this land. They do not want Members of Congress to hold office for more than three years, but the Secretaries of State are removable only for bad conduct. It follows that these Ministers, perfectly informed about current affairs, enjoy a great superiority over the delegates that chance has assembled from all parts of the Continent, and who are for the most part strangers to their task. Mr. Jay especially has already acquired a particular ascendancy over the members of Congress. All the important business passes through his hands; he makes his report on it, and it is rare that Congress is of an opinion different from his own. Instead of appointing Committees, they will gradually become accustomed to see only through the eyes of Mr. Jay, and although this Minister may be as capable as anyone to direct the conduct of the United States well, his influence must necessarily strike a blow to the liberty and the impartiality that should reign in the national Senate.

James Monroe to James Madison, New York, 26 December 1785

His character is too well established to be called in question upon any unimportant or trivial occasion.

Louis Guillaume Otto to French Foreign Minister Comte de Vergennes, New York, 10 January 1786

Mr. Jay's political importance increases every day. Congress appears to govern itself only by his impulses, and it is as difficult to obtain anything without the concurrence of this minister as to have a measure that he has proposed rejected. The indolence of most of the members of Congress and the ignorance of some others occasion this Superiority. It is much more convenient to ask the opinion of the minister of foreign affairs regarding all current business than to resolve themselves into a Committee, so that Mr. Jay's prejudices and passions insensibly become those of Congress, and that without being aware of it this Assembly is no more than the instrument of its first Minister. Happily Mr. Jay is a patriot and generally well disposed, but his grievances against France render him highly inflexible regarding our most just requests. I have already had the honor to inform you that neither M. de Marbois nor I have received any response to the various memoranda that we have delivered for nearly a year. This minister always tells me that Congress is too busy to take them into consideration, but I know that this Assembly has not had anything very important to decide for a long time, and that these delays are due only to the ill will of Mr. Jay. I would not complain, My Lord, if I did not have reason to fear that the long silence of Congress may be attributed to my inactivity, but I am pained to see that for the simplest things, and what requires only two hours of discussion, this minister has put off responding for several months. Such is among others the Treaty proposed by M. le Baron d'Ogny [over postal matters between France and the U.S.] I have not yet obtained any response on this Subject, and I cannot importune Mr. Jay since his response is always ready; it is to say that he will seize the first occasion to bring this affair to the attention of Congress. Besides, this Minister has the character, for which the Quakers are reproached, of never responding directly to any question that is put to him. As he never makes his opinion known, it is impossible to rectify it, and although it may be he who inspires most of the resolutions of Congress, he always has the air of referring to this assembly for all clarifications that are asked of him. It is very troublesome for us, My Lord, that for so important a position, the choice of Congress has justly fallen on a man who does not like us. The article of the fisheries is always on his mind, and it is impossible to make him see reason regarding a subject on which we have not really been prejudicial to the United States. Besides, whatever this minister's prejudices may be in our regard, I cannot deny that there are few men in America more able to fill the position that he occupies. The veneration that he has inspired in almost all members of Congress proves more than anything else that even the jealousy so inseparable from the American character has not found a hold on him, and that he is as circumspect in his conduct as he is firm and unshakeable in his political principles and in his coldness for France.

Louis Guillaume Otto to French Foreign Minister Comte de Vergennes, New York, 20 May 1786
Mr. Jay . . . is only the echo of the delegates of Massachusetts Bay.

New York Daily Advertiser, 20 February 1788

[Nominated for state ratifying convention] From his long services abroad and at home, and the nature of his present office as minister of foreign affairs, must be supposed to possess the best information of any man in the United States, on our relative situation with foreign nations.

Patrick Henry: Speech in Virginia Ratifying Convention, 13 June 1788

As to the American Secretary [for Foreign Affairs], the goodness of his private character is not doubted.—It is public conduct which we are to inspect. The public conduct of this Secretary goes against the express authority of nine States.—Although he may be endowed with the most brilliant talents, I have a right to consider his politics as abandoned. Yet his private virtues may merit applause.

Charles Tillinghast to John Lamb, Poughkeepsie, 21 June 1788

I am happy to inform you that our Friends here continue firm in the opposition [to the Constitution], and that all the Arts of a Hamilton &c will have no effect, although he, the Chancellor, & Mr. Jay are continually singling out the Members in Opposition (when out of Convention) and conversing with them on the subject. The latter's manners and mode of address would probably do much mischief, were the members not as firm as they are—

Extract of a letter from a Gentleman at Poughkeepsie, New York Daily Advertiser, 28 June 1788

Mr. Jay arose [in the New York ratifying convention], commanding great respect and remarkable attention, he was heard with great pleasure and satisfaction; and, no doubt, he spoke convincingly on the points raised. He has the most peculiar knack of expressing himself I ever heard. Fancy, passion, and in short every thing that marks an orator, he is a stranger to; and yet none who hear but are pleased with him, and captivated beyond expression. He appears to me not to speak as a scribe, but as a man having a right to speak, and at the same time having authority to command them to obey:— he was up about fifteen minutes.

Peter Van Schaack to Henry C. Van Schaack, 29 June 1788

I am told Mr. Jay's Arguments like the Rock of Ajax knocked down all opposition, and like the Pillar of Fire which conducted the Israelites through the Wilderness, showed Us the Way out of our many Embarrassments.

John Jay to Robert R. Livingston, undated

When our friendship first commenced, or rather when it was particularly professed to each other (the 29 March 1765) and for sometime after, I took it into my head that our dispositions were in many respects similar. Afterwards I conceived a different opinion. It appeared to me that you had more vivacity. Bashfulness and pride rendered me more staid. Both equally ambitious but pursuing it in different roads. You flexible, I pertinacious. Both equally sensible of indignities, you less prone to sudden resentments. Both possessed of warm passions, but you of more self-possession. You formed for a citizen of the world, I for a College or a Village. You fond of large acquaintance, I careless of all but a few. You could forbid your countenance to tell tales, mine was a babbler. You understood men and *women* early, I knew them not. You had talents and inclination for intrigue, I had neither. Your mind (and body) received pleasure from a variety of objects, mine from few. You was naturally easy of access, and in advances, I in neither. Unbounded confidence kept us together—may it ever exist!

Robert Barnwell to John Kean, New York, 10 January 1789

I have had the satisfaction of being introduced to a number of valuable characters, and amongst them though at the head in my opinion is Mr. Jay, from some cause unknown to my self I had ever entertained the highest estimation of the Ability and Principle of this gentleman. Neither his Official writings nor his conversation gave me room to think this predilection misplaced. The most happy talent in the distribution of his Subjects, the closest reasonings and the most impartial Reports combine to render him the most proper person for the Office which he holds, and on seeing him and hearing him speak (the purity of his language excepted) could I believe the transmigration of souls. I could readily distinguish the same Spirit and appearance which belonged to and inspired a Hamden and a Pym.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, New York, 12 January 1789

Mr. and Mrs. Jay desire their affectionate Regards to you. He is as plain as a Quaker, and as mild as New Milk, but under all this, an abundance of Rogury in his Eye's. I need to say to you who so well know him, that he possesses an excellent Heart.

Tench Coxe to James Madison, New York, 27 January 1789

Mr. Jay who is the only candidate besides [John Adams] that is talked of [for U.S. Vice President] will have but little support in this Matter left. He appears to have no Views himself. Though well qualified for more important station than the proper Duties of the VP. render that yet I think it would be wrong to draw him for the Office of foreign affairs. Our treaties are all unformed—he alone knows the whole Negotiations—he is among the very few who have been in the way of qualifying themselves for

foreign negotiations. He is much esteemed in Pennsylvania but her votes & influence would be exerted against him in the present state of the question on the seat of Government.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, New York, New York, 27 May 1789

[Jay] is more known [than Hamilton] by character throughout the U.S.

Comte de Moustier to French Foreign Minister Comte de Morin, New York, 8 September 1789

Mr. Jay is fulfilling the functions [of the Department of State] while awaiting the nomination that will be made by the President. This Secretary has not suppressed anything of his repulsive manners, his unpleasant character or his extreme bias against France. Born into a refugee family, he retained the feelings of a religious persecutee and he is the only man from the State of New York, who is opposed to tolerance of the Catholic religion, saying that the lands cleared by his ancestors would never be used to nourish those who chased them from their homeland. Although Mr. Jay never ceases to demand generosity from those who negotiate with him, he gives none in return. Attached to the New England party, he is easily tempted by the smallest gains and he neither can nor will see the big picture. His reserve, taciturnity, and grave demeanor give him greater regard than he seems to merit; he is neither an Orator, nor a good writer, nor assiduous in his office and the Department of State will not make him more approachable or more hard-working. I believe that, in spite of the arrogance of this Secretary, it would be possible to win him over if as much account is taken of his personal interest, as he seems to take himself.

Samuel A. Otis to John Langdon, New York, 20 September 1789

The *Keeper of the Tower* is waiting to see which Salary is best, that of Lord Chief Justice or Secretary of State.

Samuel A. Otis to Caleb Strong, New York, 20 September 1789

Mr. Jay is to be chief Justice, or Secy. of State, at option—Suppose he will take that which gives the *best Salary*.

President George Washington to John Jay, New York, 5 October 1789

It is with singular pleasure that I address you as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, for which office your commission is enclosed.

In nominating you for the important Station, which you now fill, I not only acted in conformity to my best judgment, but I trust I did a grateful thing to the good citizens of these United States; and I have a full Confidence that the love which you bear to our country, and a desire to promote the general happiness, will not suffer you to hesitate a moment to bring into action the talents, knowledge, and integrity which are so necessary to be exercised at the head of that department which must be considered as the keystone of our political fabric.

Joshua Loring to Jonathan Palfrey, Boston, 13 May 1790

We have had the first Circuit Court opened here lately; Jay of New York Chief Justice; who appears quite in Court Style with respect to attendance, having Mr. Jackson the Marshal, Col. Samuel Bradford Deputy Marshal always attending him upon his excursions or visits; otherwise he is a plain dressing Man & makes but a poor figure, being rather of a small size, remarkably thin & in my opinion looks more like an high Lad alias a worn out Buck* than a Judge of the first Court in America. This proves the falsity of judging by appearances as it is allowed he is a man of superior abilities & understanding.

*A dandy or a fop.

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 15 May 1790

The Chief Justice hath delighted the people of Massachusetts—they regret that Boston was not the place of his nativity-and his manners, they consider, so perfect as to believe that New York stole him from New England.

John Jay to Catharine Ridley, Philadelphia, 1 February 1791

My Life has for many Years past been in several Respects various—It is the Fortune of few to choose their Situations—it is the Duty & Interest of all to accommodate themselves to the one which Providence chooses for them—on my Return from Europe I was placed in an office which confined me to my Desk & Papers—I am now in one which takes me from my Family half the Year, and obliges me to pass too considerable a part of my Time on the Road, in Lodging Houses & Inns.

Robert Troup to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 19 March 1792

The Moment Jay came forward [as a candidate for the governor of New York] I abandoned all ideas of Burr & have constantly been doing every thing in my power to promote Jay's election. If we can carry it the state will be blessed. He is one of the worthiest of men—& independent of his character I owe him obligations which my heart tells me I never can discharge.

James Madison: Memorandum on a Discussion with President Washington about his Retirement, Philadelphia, 5 May 1792

With respect to Mr. Jay his election [as President] would be extremely dissatisfactory on several accounts. By many he was believed to entertain the same obnoxious [monarchical] principles with Mr. Adams, & at the same time would be less open and therefore more successful in propagating them.

By others (a pretty numerous class) he was disliked & distrusted, as being thought to have espoused the claims of British Creditors at the expense of the reasonable pretensions of his fellow Citizens in debt to them. Among the western people, to whom his negotiations for ceding the Mississippi to Spain were generally known, he was considered as their most dangerous enemy & held in peculiar distrust & disesteem.

John Jay to Sarah Jay, East Hartford, Conn., 18 June 1792

[On his loss to George Clinton in the disputed New York gubernatorial election of 1792.] The reflection that the majority of the Electors were for me is a pleasing one; that injustice has taken place does not surprise me, and I hope will not affect you very sensibly. The intelligence found me perfectly prepared for it. Having nothing to reproach myself with in relation to this event, it shall neither discompose my temper, nor postpone my sleep. A few years more will put us all in the dust; and it will then be of more importance to me to have governed *myself* than to have governed the *State*.

Associate Justice James Iredell to Hannah Iredell, Richmond, Va., 20 May 1793

We are just arrived, perfectly well but extremely fatigued—We have each of us got an excellent room in the same house. Mr. Jay grows infinitely upon intimacy.

John Jay to Colonel Read, London, 14 August 1794

To see things as being what they are, to estimate them aright, and to act accordingly, are of all attainments the most important.

John Jay to Lindley Murray, Royal Hotel, Pall-Mall, London, England, 22 August 1794

I perceive that we concur in thinking that we must go home to be happy, and that our home is not in this world. Here we have nothing to do but our duty, and by it to regulate our business and our pleasures, and travellers through the world (as we all are) may, without scruple, gratefully enjoy the good roads, pleasant scenes, and agreeable accommodations with which Providence may be pleased to render our journey more cheerful and comfortable; but in search of these we are not to deviate from the main road, nor, when they occur, should we permit them to detain or retard us. The theory of prudence is sublime and in many respects simple. The practice is difficult; and it necessarily must be so, or this would cease to be a state of probation.

Jeremiah Smith to William Plumer, Philadelphia, 24 February 1795

I shall attend the Supreme Court today—I am told that the Judges will this day deliver their opinions *seriatim* in the McClary Cause—This indicates that a difference in opinion exists on the Bench—They miss the chief-Justice—He was the ornament of the Bench—

Gouverneur Morris: Diary, London, 14 June 1795

[Referring to the Jay Treaty] I presume that it will be confirmed by a feeble Majority but it will I imagine hang about Mr. Jay's Neck like a Mill Stone in his political Voyages.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 31 December 1796

With respect to Mr. Jay you know that I believe him an upright honest Man, not given to intrigue, and incapable of deserting an old and long tried Friend, a Man of Honor, a Man of principle, a Man of Religion.

Timothy Pickering to Rufus King, Philadelphia, 4 May 1799

We are looking forward with anxiety to the next election for Governor [1801]. . . . The idea is that Mr. Jay will retire from public life. . . . Would you believe, my good friend, that our influence on a general scale has been considerably diminished by Mr. Jay's administration? This, I am persuaded, will to you appear incredible: the fact nevertheless is so. With the best intentions his administration has injured his reputation and lessened our weight. This disappointment has contributed more than any event that has ever occurred to shake my confidence in our present system of government. I have long been anxious to communicate this extraordinary fact to you, but I have been restrained by motives which will readily occur to you. I can conceal it no longer. His last election [1798] bore no sort of comparison in point of zeal and exertion with the one preceding it. . . . The opinion I give you is not confined to a few of our friends.

John Jay to Lindley Murray, Bedford, N.Y. 12 June 1805

For a long course of years I had been looking forward with desire to the tranquil retirement in which I now live, and my expectations from it have not been disappointed. I flatter myself that this is the inn at which I am to stop in my journey through life. How long I shall be detained is uncertain, but I rejoice in the prospect of the probability of being permitted to pass my remaining time in a situation so agreeable to me.

Jared Sparks: Conversation with James Madison, April 1830

In speaking of Mr. Jay's suspicions respecting the policy of the French Court at the time of making peace, Mr. Madison observed, that "he had two strong traits of character, suspicion and religious bigotry.



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